

Message Text

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ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06
AID-05 L-03 CU-02 SS-15 NSC-05 H-01 CIAE-00 INR-07
NSAE-00 SP-02 /074 W
-----022123 118302 /66

R 021345Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9539
INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMEMBASUY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USMISSION GENEVA

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CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SWEL, SREF, BC, UNSC
SUBJECT: REFUGEES: BRIEFING BY ASYG FARAH

1. SUMMARY: UN ASSTSEC GEN FARAH BRIEFED DIPLOMATIC CORPS FEBRUARY 27 ON GENERAL CONCLUSIONS OF HIS NEARLY THREE-WEEK MISSION IN BOTSWANA. REPORT OF FINDINGS WAS DIVIDED INTO TWO MAIN HEADINGS: (A) REFUGEES AND (B) ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO HELP BOTSWANA AS A RESULT OF "DIVERSION OF DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES" DUE TO RHODESIAN BORDER THREAT. THIS MESSAGE COVERS HIS REPORT ON REFUGEES WHICH, HE NOTED, WAS OF "GREAT URGENCY". WE ARE ALSO POUCHING MEMCON DEALING WITH BRIEFING BY UNHCR DEPUTY ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, HOMANN-HERIMBERG. ECONOMIC AID AND PUBLIC ASPECTS OF MISSION WILL BE COVERED BY SEPTELS. END SUMMARY.

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2. FARAH DIVIDED SUBJECT OF REFUGEES INTO TWO ASPECTS: REFUGEES FROM ZIMBABWE AND THOSE FROM SOUTH AFRICA, PRIMARILY SOWETO.

A. ZIMBABWEANS. FARAH LABELED THE REFUGEE PROBLEM IN FRANCISTOWN AREA OF "TREMENDOUS IMPORTANCE". HE HAD VISITED TRANSIT CAMP THERE ALONG WITH SEVERAL MEMBERS

OF HIS MISSION INCLUDING UNHCR REP. HE DESCRIBED CONDITIONS AS SO "APPALLING" THAT HE ASKED GOB HEALTH OFFICER HOW MANY PERSONS THE CAMP HAD BEEN BUILT FOR. THE REPLY WAS 250; HE FOUND 600 WERE THERE AND HAD LEARNED FROM GOB THAT ANOTHER 400 HAD ARRIVED SINCE HIS VISIT A WEEK EARLIER. HE SAID PEOPLE WERE "LITERALLY CRAWLING OVER EACH OTHER". BECAUSE OF TRANSIT CAMP'S LOCATION (BETWEEN PRISON AND PMU) IN CENTER OF TOWN, IT CANNOT BE EXPANDED. FARAH SAID UNHCR HAS AGREED, AT GOB REQUEST, TO TAKE EMERGENCY STEPS TO BUILD ANOTHER TRANSIT CAMP OUTSIDE FRANCISTOWN TO ACCOMMODATE 500 PERSONS. SOME SIX TO TEN MONTHS WOULD BE REQUIRED TO BUILD THE NEW TRANSIT CAMP, HOWEVER, MEANWHILE "TO REDUCE MISERY", GOB AND UNHCR HAVE DECIDED TO TRY TO OBTAIN TENTS TO PROVIDE NEEDED SHELTER FOR THE 500 THE GOAL IS TO PUT UP THE TENTS IN THE NEXT "MONTH OR TWO" WITH EXPECTATION THEY WILL SERVE FOR UP TO ONE YEAR "UNTIL THE NEW TRANSIT CENTER IS ERECTED".

FARAH DESCRIBED THE REFUGEES AS UNLIKE ANY OTHERS IN THAT OVER 90 PERCENT WERE SINGLE, AMONG THEM 40 GIRLS WHOM HE INSISTED BE MOVED IMMEDIATELY TO HOUSING IN FRANCISTOWN. FARAH SAID A NUMBER OF THE REFUGEES WANTED FURTHER EDUCATION; MOST WANT TO LEAVE (FOR MILITARY TRAINING, PRESUMABLY).

LOCATION: FARAH SAID GOB HAS DECIDED TO LOCATE THE TRANSIT CENTER NEAR SELEBI-PIKWE ABOUT 100 MILES SOUTH OF FRANCISTOWN. UNHCR HAS, HE SAID, MADE AVAILABLE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FUNDS FOR SITE PREPARATION WHICH HAS BEGUN. UNHCR REP. WHO WAS PRESENT AT BRIEFING, COMMENTED THAT GOB NEEDS TO KNOW SIZE OF TENTS IN ORDER TO PREPARE FOUNDATIONS. FARAH EXPLAINED SELEBI-PIKWE SELECTED AS SITE BECAUSE OF THE GOOD ASPHALT RUNWAY (E.G. FOR FLYING REFUGEES OUT AND SUPPLIES IN), FOR SECURITY PURPOSES (BEING RELATIVELY DISTANT FROM RHODESIAN FRONTIER), BECAUSE THE COPPER/NICKEL MINE HAS BROUGHT IN A "NUMBER OF MODERN FACILITIES AND STRUCTURES", AND BECAUSE SELEBI-PIKWE IS NOT CONGESTED. IN ADDITION, FARAH NOTED 150 REFUGEES ARE CURRENTLY AT SELEBI-PIKWE AND AUTHORITIES THERE HAVE EXPERIENCE IN DEALING WITH THEM. IN SUMMARIZING, ASYG FARAH SAID SITUATION OF ZIMBABWEAN REFUGEES WAS "THE MOST SERIOUS IMMEDIATE PROBLEM" ENCOUNTERED BY HIS MISSION. BY CONTRAST, HE SAID REFUGEE PROBLEMS IN LESOTHO (A "CUL-DE-SAC") AND SWAZILAND (VERY FEW REFUGEES COME OR STAY) WERE INSIGNIFICANT.

B. SOWETO REFUGEES. ASYG FARAH, RECALLING UNGA RESO-

LUTION, ASKED THAT PROGRAMS OF ASSISTANCE BE MOUNTED WITH BLS GOVERNMENTS INCLUDING PROGRAMS FOR "CARE, SUBSISTENCE AND EDUCATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN REFUGEES". FARAH DESCRIBED SOWETO REFUGEES, SOME 440 OF WHOM ARE "REGISTERED" BY GOB AT THE PRESENT TIME, AS YOUNG, NOT ALIGNED TO ANY OF THE OLD POLITICAL MOVEMENTS BUT RATHER PARTY OF NEW STUDENT MOVEMENT. HE SAID THE MAJORITY OF THEM WANTED TO STAY IN BOTSWANA AND ATTEND SECONDARY SCHOOL. THE UN MISSION FOUND 18 (OF THE 440) WERE AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL AND ARE ANXIOUS TO PURSUE THEIR STUDIES. AT PRESENT, HE SAID, STUDENTS HAVE "NO HOUSING" AND ARE WANDERING AIMLESSLY. FARAH DESCRIBED THE GOB AS "CONCERNED" AND HAD EXPRESSED HOPE THAT "INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY" COULD FINANCE (A) SECONDARY SCHOOLS FOR STUDENTS AND "(B) TRANSIT CAMP TO HOUSE STUDENTS UNTIL SPACE IS AVAILABLE IN SCHOOLS. FARAH EMPHASIZED GOB DETERMINATION NOT TO ISOLATE SOUTH AFRICAN STUDENTS, I.E. TREAT THEM AS SEPARATE. A SEP- LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RATE FACILITY MIGHT BECOME "MONUMENT TO REFUGEES". RATHER GOB INTENDS TO INTEGRATE SOUTH AFRICAN AND BOTSWANA STUDENTS. TO ILLUSTRATE, HE SAID GOB ENVISAGES BUILDING PERHAPS TWO NEW SECONDARY SCHOOLS. HALF THE STUDENT BODY OF EACH WOULD BE DRAWN FROM BATSWANA STUDENTS; THE OTHER HALF FROM SOUTH AFRICAN REFUGEE STUDENTS. MEANWHILE, GOB HAS ALSO INDICATED WILLINGNESS TO EXPAND UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA FACILITIES FOR "UP TO 50 QUALIFIED STUDENTS". FARAH COMMENTED THAT GOB WAS HESITANT TO DO ANYTHING THAT MIGHT HASTEN THE FLOW OF REFUGEES FROM SOUTH AFRICA. HIS ESTIMATE WAS THAT THE NUMBERS MIGHT INCREASE TO SOME 1500 WITHIN THE NEXT TWO YEARS.

3. FARAH JUSTIFIED CONSTRUCTION OF TRANSIT CAMP ON GROUNDS THAT STUDENTS ARRIVE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR WHEREAS THEY CAN ENROLL, UNDER GOB SYSTEM, ONLY AT SPECIFIED TIMES. THE TRANSIT CAMP WOULD BE TO HOUSE THEM UNTIL OPENINGS ARE AVAILABLE. FARAH INDICATED, AND UNHCR REP AGREED, THAT GOB DECISION IS NOW FIRM; AT LEAST TWO NEW SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND TRANSIT CAMP WILL BE CONSTRUCTED IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE COUNTRY.

4. FARAH CONCLUDED BY NOTING THAT HE HOPED TO SUBMIT REPORT ON REFUGEES TO SYG BY MARCH 20. THEREAFTER SYG WOULD FORWARD IT TO UN MEMBERS AFTER WHICH HE EXPECTED A DONOR MEETING WOULD BE CALLED. HE SAID GOB HAS BEEN "FRANK AND CANDID"; HE HOPED POTENTIAL DONOR GOVERNMENTS WOULD RESPOND TO GOB'S NEEDS.

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Message Attributes

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Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 02-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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